

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
Office of the Press Secretary

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**Fact Sheet: U.S. Support for Open Government**

On January 21, 2009, President Obama issued a Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government. This memorandum outlined three commitments that define this Administration's approach to governance: (1) government should be transparent; (2) government should be participatory; and (3) government should be collaborative.

Open Government At Home

The Administration has moved to put these commitments into practice, with impressive results:

- Data.gov has democratized access to data, with hundreds of thousands of datasets in a common format housed in a central location. Approximately 270,000 datasets have been posted, providing the public with unprecedented transparency about such diverse matters as automobile safety, air travel, air quality, workplace safety, drug safety, nutrition, crime, obesity, the employment market, and health care. These datasets have led to numerous "apps," enlisting private sector ingenuity to provide people with information that they can "readily find and use."
- Implementing Justice Brandeis' suggestion that sunlight can be "the best of disinfectants," numerous dashboards – from information technology (IT) to health care to forthcoming regulations – now give the public information with which they can hold both private and public institutions accountable. Through Recovery.gov and the information technology dashboard, the public can track how and where Recovery Act funds are spent, down to specific zip codes. Increased transparency has exposed underperforming initiatives; for example, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) has terminated \$54 million dollars' worth of information technology projects.
- About 30 agencies have developed Open Government web pages and Open Government Plans, announcing new steps to disclose information that has never been public before and new ways to encourage public participation in agency activities. Some of these Open Government plans, including those from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), have received widespread acclaim. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA)

ambitious proposals were recently featured approvingly and in detail in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

- By experimenting with prizes and challenges and new technologies, and by issuing new guidance to facilitate use of social media, we are finding fresh ways to tap the diverse expertise of people inside and outside of government. A successful example is the SAVE (Securing Americans' Value and Efficiency) Award, which allowed Federal employees to submit ideas on how to make government more efficient and effective. (The first SAVE Award produced more than 38,000 proposals, many of which are being implemented.) The Administration has also launched Challenge.gov to enable all government agencies to tap the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of the American people and collaborate to solve our nation's problems.
- The White House has established a clear presumption in favor of openness by posting visitor records, staff financial disclosures, salaries, and ethics waivers on the White House website for the first time and by reversing prior limits on access to presidential records and ordering Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reform. The Department of Justice's FOIA dashboard will enable users to assess FOIA compliance across 92 Federal agencies and over time. We are also holding ourselves accountable by putting Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (EESA), Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), and stimulus lobbying records online.

### International Efforts on Open Government

There is also significant momentum internationally to make government more transparent and accountable, and to promote public and private innovation, in part by making use of new technologies. Examples include:

- The Right to Information: Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, and India have passed progressive legislation guaranteeing the right to information and mandating the regular release of information in formats accessible to the public.
- Open Data: The United Kingdom, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, Estonia, and Canada have launched efforts similar to data.gov with the goal of proactively disclosing government data that citizens can readily use.
- Transparency and Accountability: From Brazil to Kenya to India, governments are enlisting communities to track the delivery of services, including in education and health - recognition that citizens can be valuable partners in fighting corruption and improving the efficiency of government.

### A Global Effort to Foster More Open Government

Today, in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, the President recognized that, in all corners of the globe, countries are taking unprecedented steps to make government more open and accountable. President Obama challenged those in attendance to build on this progress. He invited Leaders to join him next year in making specific commitments to promote transparency, fight corruption, energize civic engagement, and leverage new technologies to strengthen the foundations of open government.

Some governments may guarantee access to information as a fundamental right and commit to new efforts to put information in the hands of citizens. Others may empower constituents to track the assets of public officials. Countries may identify new ways of seeking the views of the public to improve the quality of our decision-making and the efficacy of our investments. Others may propose innovative approaches to tapping the expertise of the private and non-governmental sectors in solving complex problems.

While the individual commitments will differ, the collective force of a global effort will signal our resolve to transform the way we govern, empower citizens, and restore the frayed social contract between citizens and their leaders.

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